EU/Seychelles Agreement: short-stay visa waiver

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The Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs adopted the report by Emilian PAVEL (S&D, RO) on the draft Council decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the Union, of the Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Seychelles amending the Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Seychelles on the short-stay visa waiver.

The committee recommended that the European Parliament **give its consent** to the conclusion of the agreement.

The Agreement amending the Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Seychelles ensures legal coherence and harmonisation between Member States, in accordance with the **new definition of short-term stay** provided by the Schengen Borders Code amendment, which clarifies the meaning of this term (a stay of up to 90 days in any 180-day period).

Seychelles is a member of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, African Union, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation, Non-Aligned Movement, Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, Southern African Development Community and United Nations. Seychelles became a member of the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation on 15 November 2011.
The explanatory statement accompanying the recommendation notes the following points:

- **economically**, Seychelles is vulnerable economically, due to its small size, isolation, limited natural resources and dependence on tourism, which accounts for the bulk of foreign-exchange earnings. The tourism sector has become increasingly competitive. Imports needed for tourism were in large part responsible for the country's trade deficit. However, per capita income is one of the highest in Africa;
- **politically speaking**, Seychelles is a unitary republic, with a multiparty democracy. It has a unicameral parliament, the National Assembly. Parliamentary and presidential elections take place every five years, not necessarily at the same time;
- **the EU's political dialogue** with the various ACP countries and Seychelles in particular is gradually increasing.

The new visa waiver agreement will enable citizens not only to derive full benefit from the ACP-EU partnership but continuing to participate in it by travelling at a reduced, economical and practical cost under a clearer and more coherent legal framework. It significantly deepens relations between the European Union and the Seychelles, which is of great political importance in the context of the Cotonou Agreement.